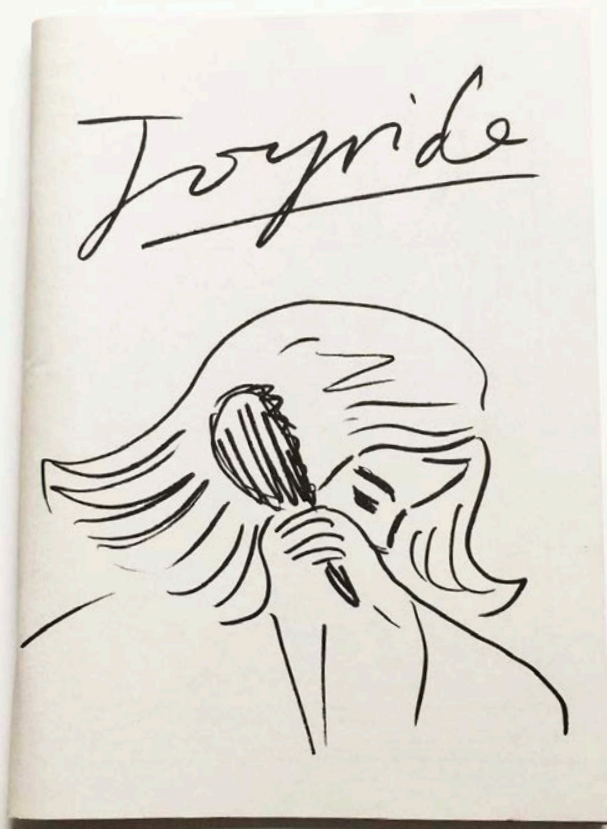


Joyride

Zoë Taylor



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2



Figure 1. (cover)
Joyride, cover

Figure 2.
Cover process



Title

This research output, entitled *Joyride* culminates in a 104-page comic published by Breakdown Press, a specialist comics publisher based in London. *Joyride* is a story of a woman who leaves a party via a car which she accidentally crashes leaving her stranded in the woods. It was printed using a Risograph process at Hato Press, London.

Submission Details

Researcher	Zoë Taylor
Collaborators	None
Title	<i>Joyride</i>
Output Type	Artefact
Output Component(s)	Illustrated comic book
Dates	2017
Dissemination	Published book, exhibitions
ORCID	https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1525-3679
DOI	https://doi.org/10.24339/erwj-1h42

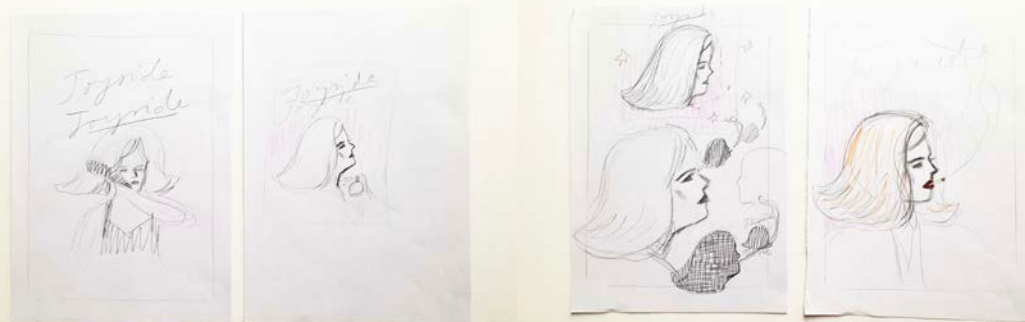


Figure 3.
Sketches for *Joyride*,
process work

Opening scenes / party

4

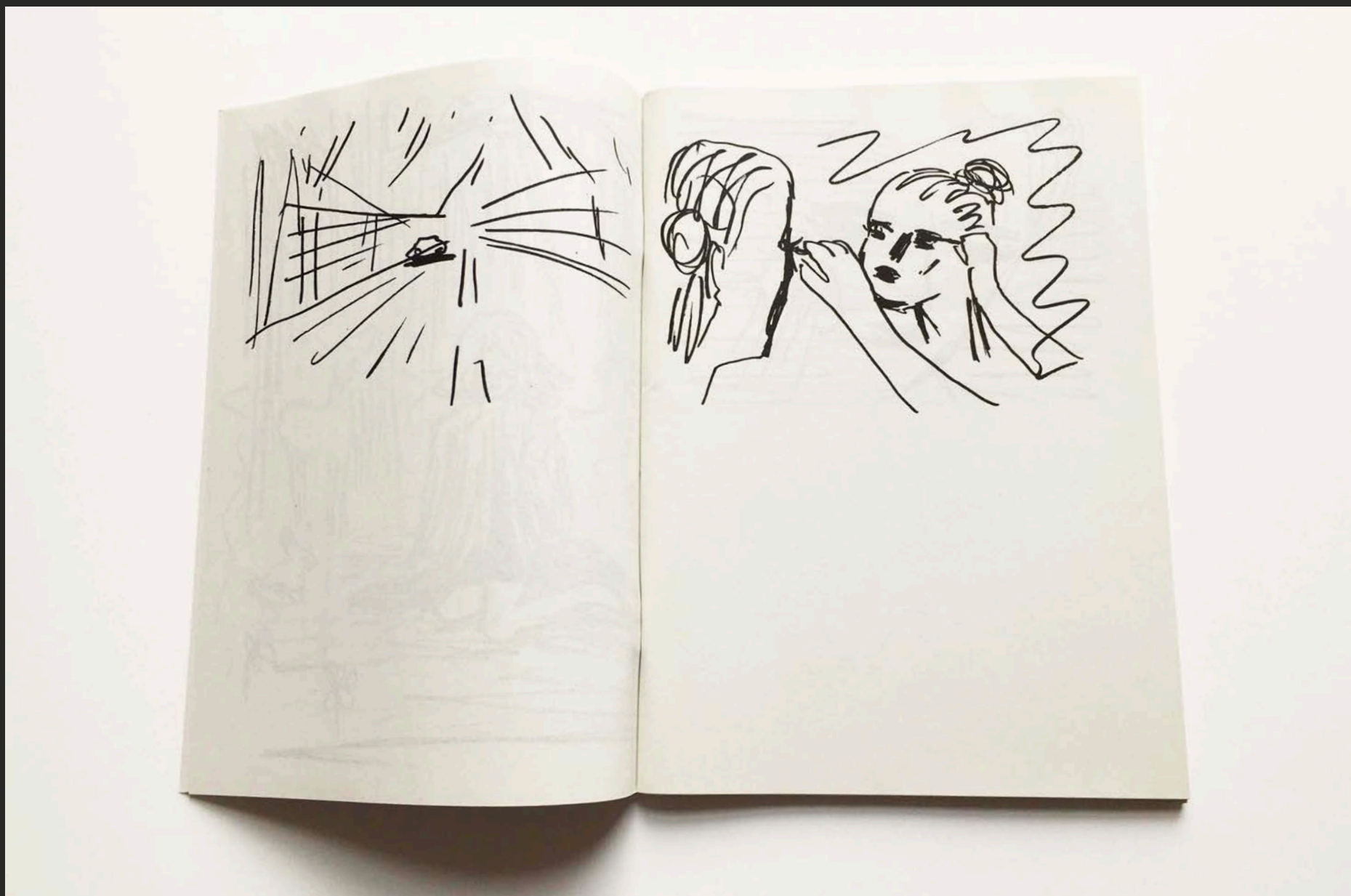
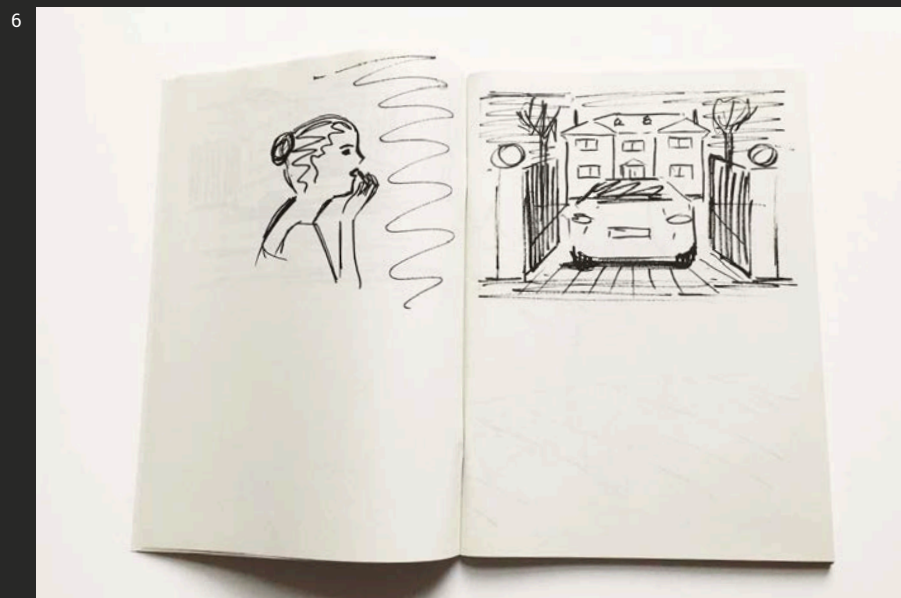


Figure 4.

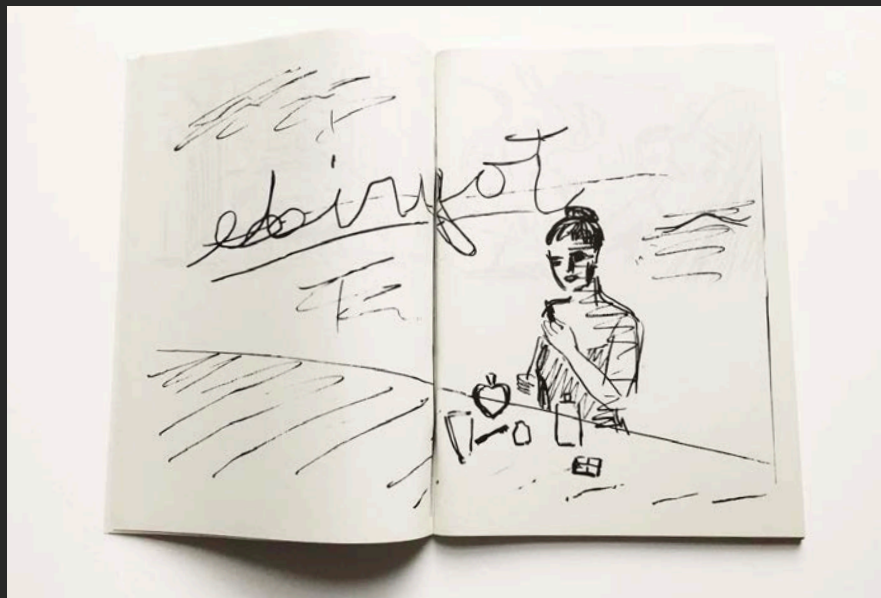
Scenes from the book: opening scenes / party



5



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7



8

Figures 5–8.
Scenes from the book: opening scenes / party

9



Figure 9.
Scenes from the book: opening scenes / party

Additional Information

Joyride is a series of 99 drawings that tell a visual story. The aim of this practice-research is to tell a graphic story in which the resonances of the individual images distract from and override the plot. This method was used as a way of obstructing the linear narrative of a story to open up the meaning of the plot and images for further interpretations.

In *Joyride* I intentionally explore fluid, ambivalent and unfixed approaches to image making and drawing. I have utilised what I see as the potentially disruptive power of the 'awkward' image and the sense of possibility for multiple interpretations offered by the 'unfinished' image. I think a degree of amateurishness can help 'un-fix' an image, making the viewer seem uncertain of its status as an artwork or a professional illustration.

This body of work provides a record of the production methods and techniques of drawing used to develop the final comic book.



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Figures 10+11.
Process work:
opening scenes / party



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Research Context

My work as an illustrator is published in fashion and editorial settings and since 2013 I have been engaged in making drawings for experimental comic publishing contexts. To try and explain this world, sometimes called 'art comics', here is a quote from the introduction to an interview I did with experimental manga pioneer Seiichi Hayashi for Varoom magazine:

'Comics,' the cartoonist Ivan Brunetti observed, 'are still a relatively young, quite open art form, with a lot of unexplored territory. This is true both in terms of the language itself as well as the subject matter.' As a new generation re-interprets the medium, there is growing interest in its history of experimentation and what the cartoonist Frank Santoro calls 'art comics' (as opposed to 'literary comics'): 'expressionistic and sometimes experimental works that often don't have a clear narrative'. It is in this light that the Japanese artist Seiichi Hayashi's pioneering manga of the 1960s and 1970s is gaining popularity in North America and Europe...' (Taylor, Z., 2014)

I am interested in the ambiguous power of images and our relationship with figurative and mimetic images in general, which historically have been seen to be magical, uncanny or suspiciously powerful. Images from Western pop culture (which is of course capitalistic and consumer-based) such as Hollywood films, music video, fashion or advertising can be framed from various social, political or cultural perspectives that may attempt to shed light on or unravel their meaning. However, I think that the power of these images can't be completely fixed or understood in these ways and removing them from their original or more specific contexts, allows that which is excessive, arresting and mysterious about them as images to come to the fore. (I'm very interested in artist John Stezaker's thoughts on this).

I explore and utilise this mysterious potential of images through my work. In a rather romantic way, I want to tap into the sense of possibility (wonder) that charged yet 'unfixed' images can sometimes open; I try to create ways

Figure 12.
Process work: opening scenes / party

of maximising the ambiguous potential of images. When I borrow or attempt to construct such imagery myself, it is primarily because I want the imagery to resonate with this sense of uncertainty and mystery, which relates to broader feelings about our attempts to make meaning and about life and our experience of it. I am also interested in what happens when a piece of music, film or written fiction is interpreted through drawing or how approaches to narrative can be taken from pop songs and applied to drawn sequences.

My stories are never about character or driven by plot, instead they draw on elements of pop cultural cliché and myth, channelling the resonances of such familiar imagery to suggest ambivalent feelings and an experience of inner life. Although I draw on my own experience, the work I make is always imaginary and never about specific events in my own life. I use this clichéd imagery to create new work but on another level the work is also about the psychic impression such imagery has made on me - it's 'affect' - and how such encounters mix with other impressions and experiences to form an inner life. These cultural experiences can be as significant as 'real' moments in your life. In inner life, the culture we consume is as much our reality as the real world we inhabit and the two are inextricably linked and inform each other.

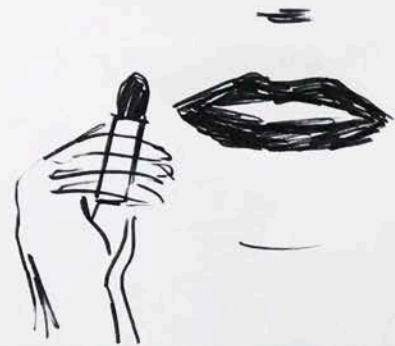
Research Question

How can I tell a graphic story where the resonances of the individual images distract from and override the plot as a way of arresting the viewer and opening up spaces for possibility (speculation) and individual thought?

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Figure 13.
Process work: opening scenes / party



Research Methodology

Resources for the initial drawings were novelist Anna Kavan and research into the history and affective power of special affects in cinema and what I call 'the sudden image' (Taylor, Z., 2008) a term I coined to define a certain kind intense and disorientating film image for example in the films of David Lynch. The process of writing and drawing began by observing the way stories are told in cinema and comics, analysing personal experience, gathering image references, taking photographs to use as image references, visualising, working with stream of consciousness, experimenting with drawing media and processes, making story boards, editing, publishing (disseminating).

I titled the book Joyride not only because driving and the suggestion of a car theft are central to the story but mainly because it captured a sequence of fast paced images and scenarios that thrill through their cinematic and spectacular associations but that ultimately do not add up to much – there's a sense of pointlessness and ambivalence at the heart of the plot – the thrill is in the images and their capacity to evoke a sense of wonder and possibility.

When I was a teenager growing up on the Kent coast in the 90s, I would often hear about teenagers going on joyrides – it was a specific kind of petty crime that seemed to come out of recession and small-town boredom. I remember my parents being very angry one weekend when our family car was stolen, later to be found by police in the middle of a road a few towns along from Margate – hotwired and suspected of having been taken for a joyride. To me it signalled something both exciting and pointless. I thought it would be interesting to transpose this idea to the context of an affluent party.

The work references clichés of American cinema and TV melodrama. I wrote a new story and the images are my own construction i.e. not directly appropriated. The book is a comic and features one drawing per page and is monochrome. I said this of the drawings in it:

Figure 14. (previous page)
Process work:
opening scenes / party

"I wanted the story to hang on moments of clichéd melodrama – car crashes, explosions, kisses etc. but I also wanted to leave lots open to interpretation through the characters and why they do what they do... My drawings used to be more tonal but lately I've enjoyed being more economical and seeing if you can create atmosphere through just lines and marks. I had tried adding colour in earlier versions but then it felt right that everything was quite stark and seemed more instant – like when you're getting thoughts down in a sketchbook." (Taylor, Z., *It's Nice That* interview)

As I moved on with the project, I rejected the 'Film Noir look' and tonal pastel drawing of the original sketches – I wanted something more disruptive and to make work which felt fresher and approached these clichés in a less obvious way and which signified the world of thought, impression and inner life more effectively so I started working with very simple gestural pen drawings which looked like notes. Fragmented, half formed yet intense drawings seemed more right as a technique than the rigidity of boxes and speech bubbles typical of comics. After working out the composition of each drawing, I traced these on a light box making multiples of each image until I found one that had the 'right' feeling of spontaneity. The composition was important for creating a sense of intensity and drama in the images. I utilised the 'surprise' element offered by sequential imagery and tension that can be created through juxtaposing imagery. A zine of sketches I made along the way retrospectively showed me new ways of putting images together which I used in a later work ('Whose side?' to be published in FROM5TO7 anthology by Otto Press).

The production of the book was supported by attendance of the Santoro Correspondence Course for Comic Book Makers led by experimental comics maker Frank Santoro (based in Pittsburgh) and published by London based Breakdown Press, who approached me to publish with them.

She hot-wired the car

15



Figure 15.
Scenes from book: 'she hot-wired the car'



16

Figure 16.
Scenes from book: 'she hot-wired the car'

17



Figure 17.
Process work: 'she hot-wired the car'





Insights

Throughout the making process there was a tension between how intelligible I wanted the story to be and how powerful I wanted the images to be in their own right. I was trying to tell a linear story while at the same time disrupting the narrative of the tale

I discovered new approaches to improvisation, layout and drawing through both the process of making and critiquing *Joyride* and have been applying some of these findings to develop new work.

In the context of experimental comic publishing, this kind of narrative/non-narrative approach which aims to open a space for thought could be compared to work by Aiden Koch or *Incanto* by Frank Santoro but is unique in its particular tone and combination of cinematic quality and individual drawing method. The work contributes to the field of experimental comics and discussions around what's possible in comics, what they can be and do.

I received feedback from people who liked it; in most part they appreciated the drawing language, the book's simplicity and its oddness. Interest in the book extended beyond the niche world of alternative comics – it was covered by the prominent graphic art website *It's Nice That* because of interest in the illustrations and people unknown to me outside of the comics world have got in touch to say they enjoyed it – for example, BBC radio music journalist, Mary Anne Hobbs.

Within the world of alternative comics however, reviewers acknowledged the novel approach of placing one image at the top end of each page and the deliberate ambivalence of the story, which invites different readings. Andy Oliver at *Broken Frontier* for example wrote 'This stylistic device may be overtly symbolising in an acutely meta way the unique interpretive "reading between the panels" element of comics and emphasising the audience's added responsibility in eliciting meaning in *Joyride* for themselves.' (Oliver, A., 2017)

Figure 18+19. (previous pages)
Process work:
'she hot-wired the car'

For Philip Leblanc, writing for *Comics Beat*, it was a unique work, he said 'Every once in a while, I come across a comic like Zoë Taylor's *Joyride*. An experiment so different and unique that you can't help but appreciate the medium of comics even more once you're done.' (Leblanc, P., 2017)

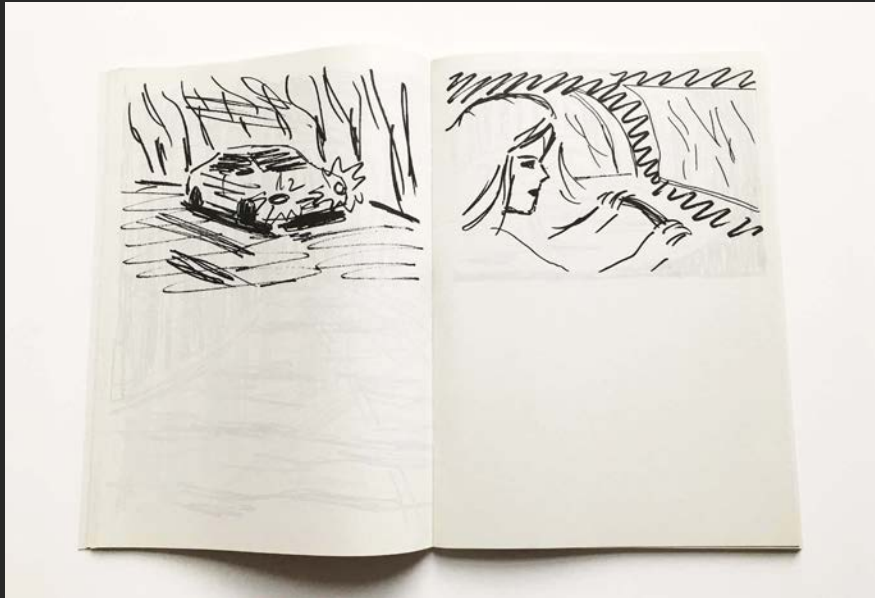
For Alex Hoffman at *Sequential State*, it epitomises the trend in lo-fi comics but he said he 'found the reading experience exhilarating and unique compared to other work'. He acknowledged the precision of the sketchy drawing 'each mark, despite its looseness, feels essential' and wrote that the emotional experience of the work is the main effect; 'If anything presents itself fully in *Joyride*, it's the raw emotion of the work...perhaps that's the point – *Joyride* is a comic that, through its hurried illustration and lack of definition, brings its emotional heft to a fine point.' (Hoffman, A., 2017). Likewise, Rob Clough at *High Low* acknowledged that the story was primarily about the images, saying it was useless to make any sense of the plot; 'Taylor forces the reader to simply experience the images... she focuses strictly on the action and takes the reader along with her, thanks to her expressive, immediate style and the cheap newsprint that soaks up those thick, black lines.' (Clough, R., 2017).

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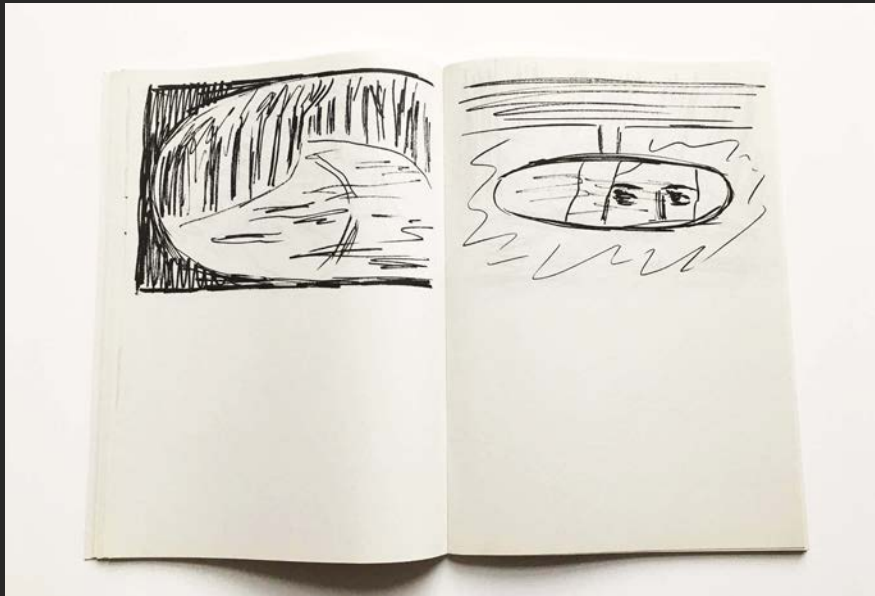


Crash

Figure 20.
Scenes from the book: crash

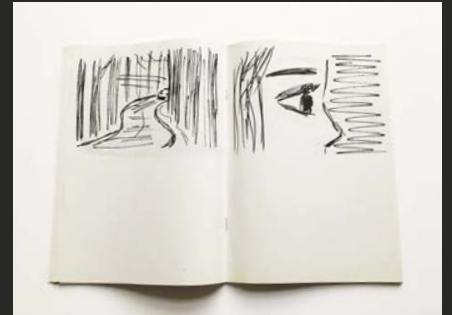
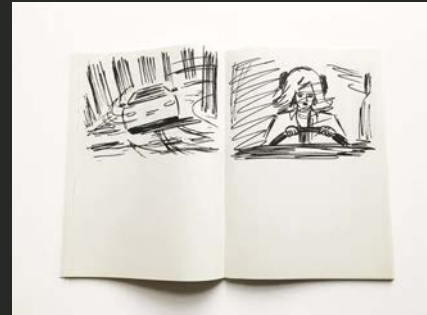


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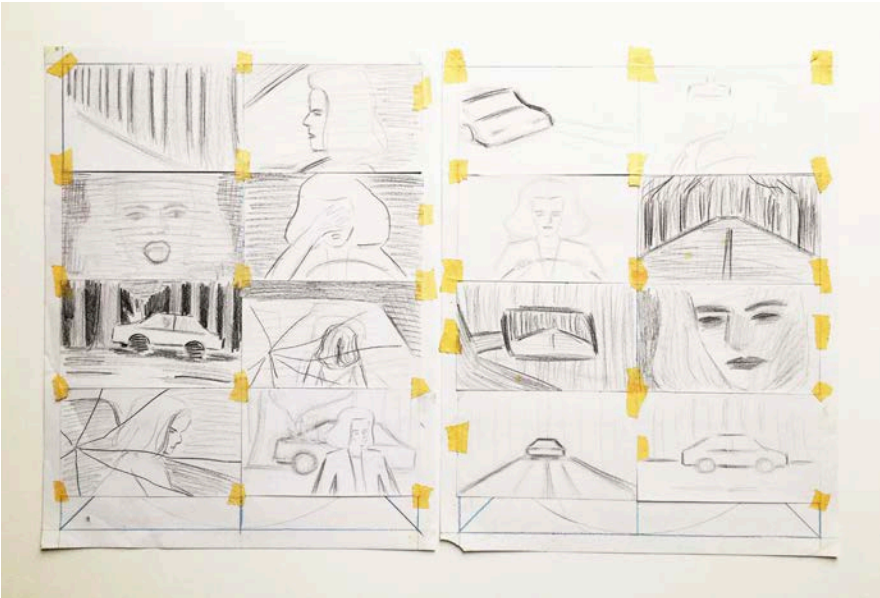


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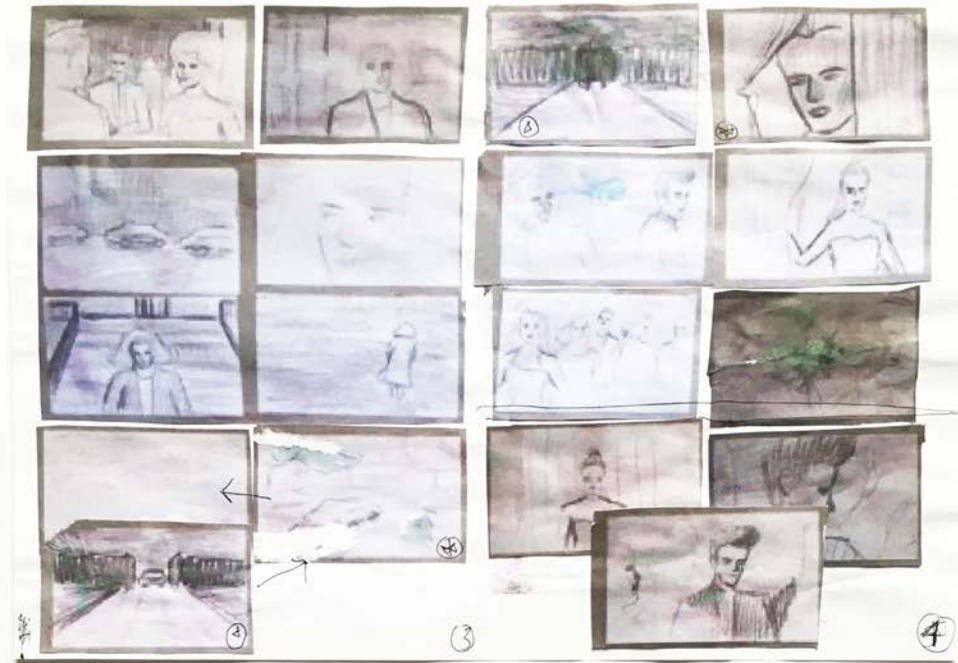
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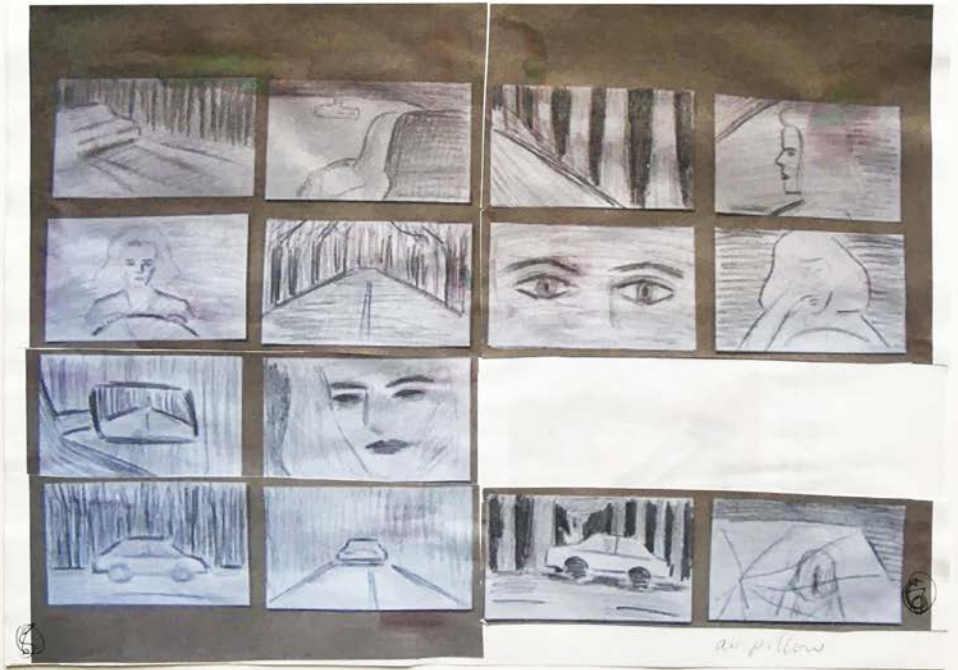
Figures 21–23.
Scenes from the book: crash



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Figures 24+25.
Process work: crash



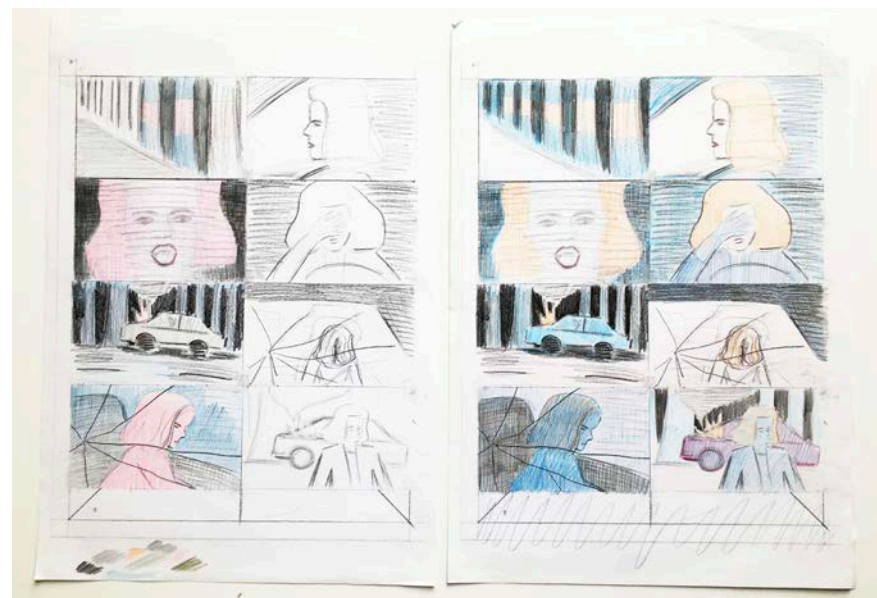
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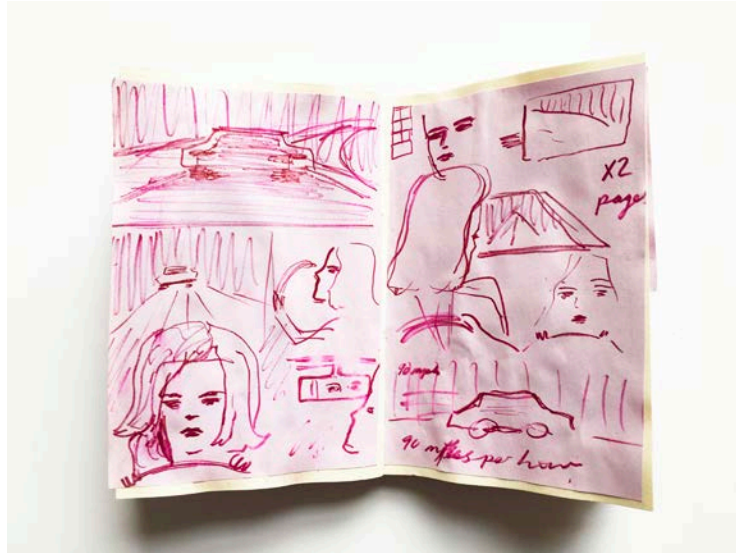


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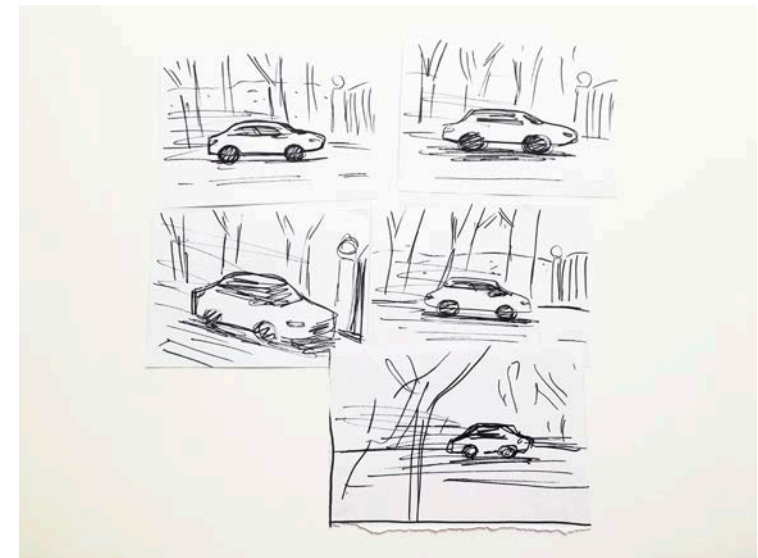
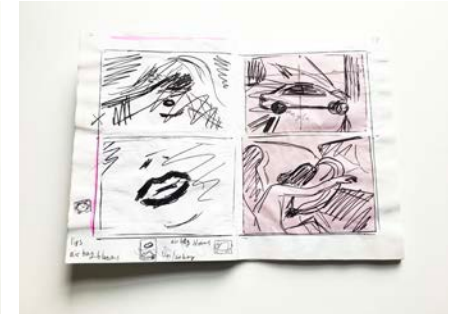


Figures 26–29.
Process work: crash



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31



Figures 30+31.
Process work: crash

Dissemination

Publications by researcher

Authored books:

2016 *Joyride*, Breakdown Press, London (graphic story)

Press Coverage

2017 'Exploring escape and unique layout in Zoë Taylor's *Joyride*', Leblanc. P., *Comics Beat*

2017 'Joyride – Zoë Taylor's Minimalist Drama Takes the Reader on a Spontaneous and Evocative Journey of Discovery' Oliver. A., *Broken Frontier*

2017 'Joyride review', Hoffman. A., *Sequential State*

2017 'Zoë Taylor's *Joyride*' Clough. R., *High Low*

Joyride exhibited at

International:

Comic Arts Brooklyn (New York, USA), Toronto Comic Arts Festival (Toronto, Canada), The Millionaires Club (Comics and graphics festival, Leipzig, Germany), Fanzine Festival (Paris), Oslo Comics expo (Oslo, Norway), Tenderette (Valencia, Spain), BilBolBul (Bologna, Italy), Short Run (Seattle, USA), Chicago Art Book Fair (Chicago, USA), NextComic Festival (Linz, Austria)

UK:

East London Comic Arts Festival (London, UK), Brighton Illustration Fair (Brighton, UK), Safari Festival (London, UK), Thought Bubble (Leeds, UK), The Lakes International Comic Arts Festival (Kendal, UK)

Public talks, academic talks, interviews

July 2019 'RCA Summer School; Visual narrative', guest speaker, Royal College of Art, London

March 2017, 'Next Up', career and practice talk, University Arts London, Shoreditch Town Hall, London

Feb 2017, 'Work/Play' invited speaker and panel guest, Royal College of Art, London



Figure 32.
Process work: crash

June 2015, Guest speaker, Professional Practice; 'Creative Commissioning' panel, Royal College of Art, London

May 2015, Fashion illustration panel with Alexander Fury, Gary Card and Richard Kilroy at FIG UnFramed at Blue Bird

April 2015, 'Show and Tell' artist talk at Pick Me Up, Somerset House, London

April 2015 'Artist's Demo' at Pick Me Up, Somerset House, London

Writing on the researcher by others

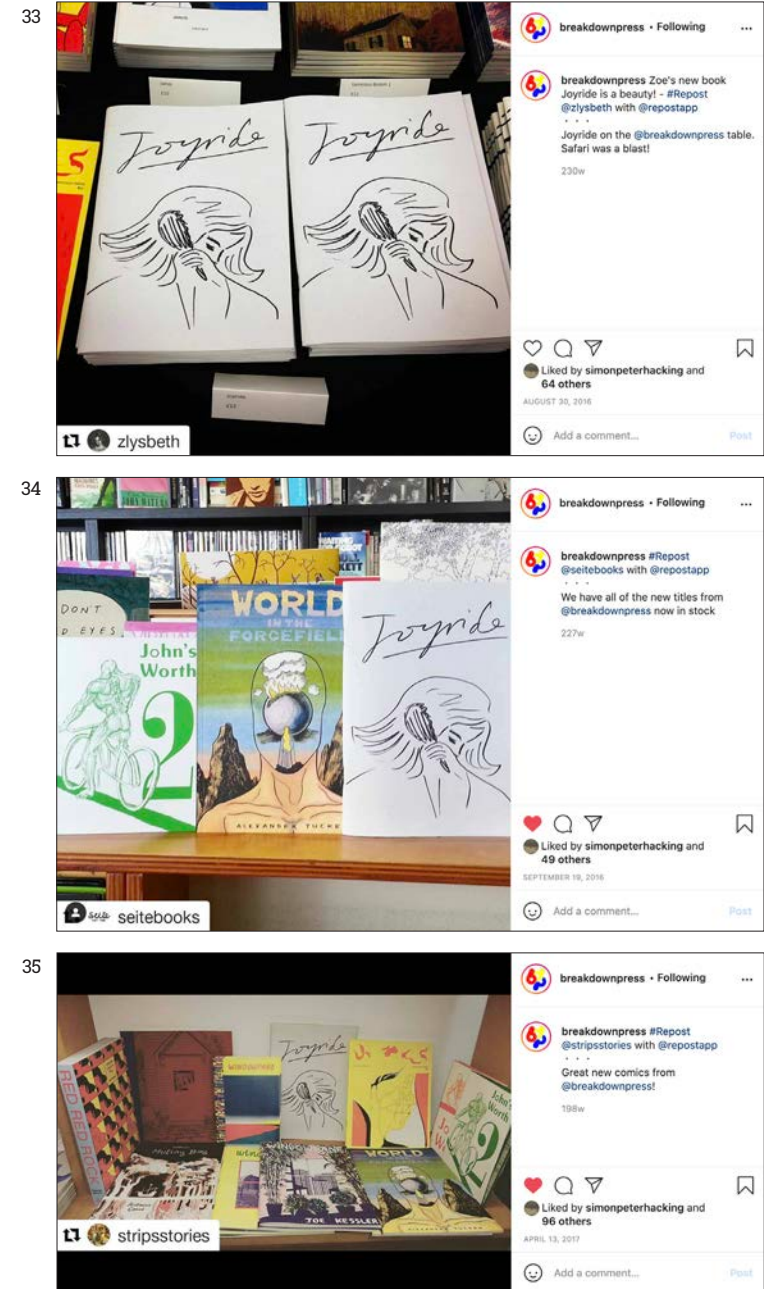
October 2016, *Artless: Art and illustration by Simple Means* (book), ed. Marc Valli and Amandas Ong), Laurence King publishing, London. A chapter on Zoë Taylor's work.

Nov 2015, *Elephant magazine*, Zoë Taylors work discussed and featured in a piece on art vs illustration and cinematic drawing, Marc Valli, London

Figure 33.
Joyride at Safari festival where it launched, Protein Studios, London, UK, 2016

Figure 34.
Joyride at Seite Books, Los Angeles, California, USA, 2016

Figure 35.
Joyride at Strip Stories, Hamburg, Germany, 2017



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Woods / explosion



Figure 36.
Scenes from the book: woods / explosion

37



Figure 37.
Scenes from the book: woods / explosion

38



Figure 38.
Process work: woods / explosion

39



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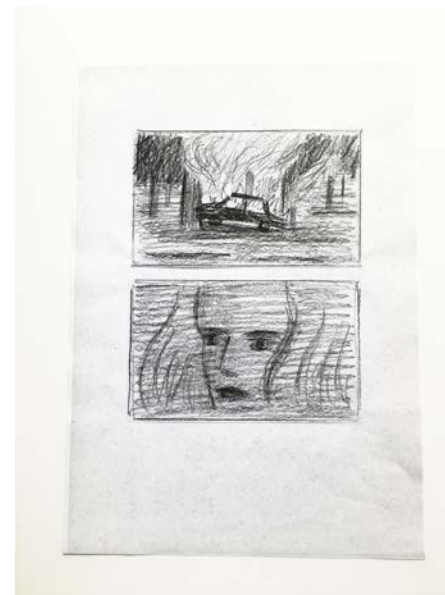


Figure 39+40.
Process work: woods / explosion

Caught by torchlight

41



Figure 41.
Scenes from the book: caught by torchlight



42

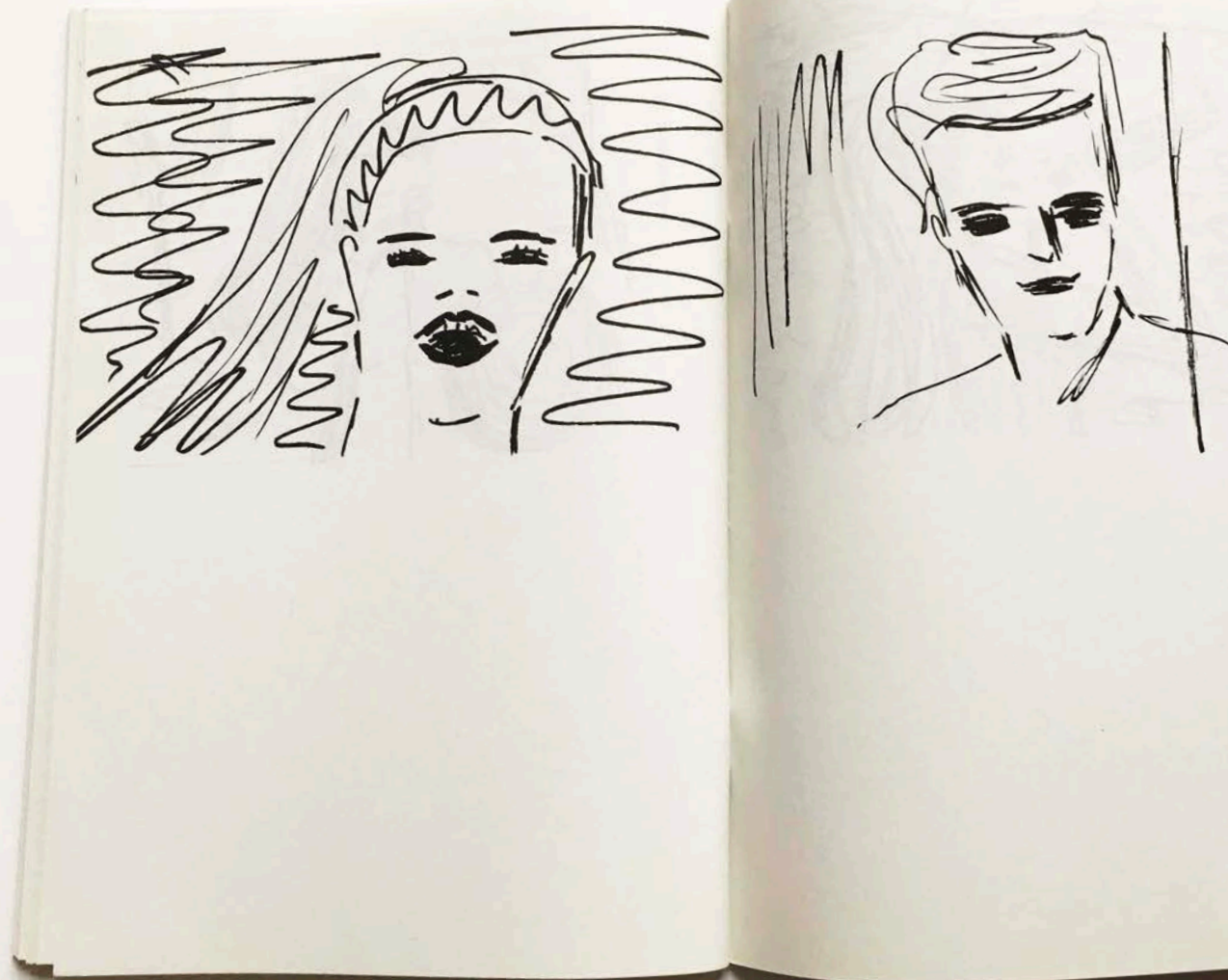
Figure 42.
Scenes from the book: caught by torchlight

43



Figure 43.
Process work: caught by torchlight

44



Ending

Figure 44.
Scenes from the book: ending

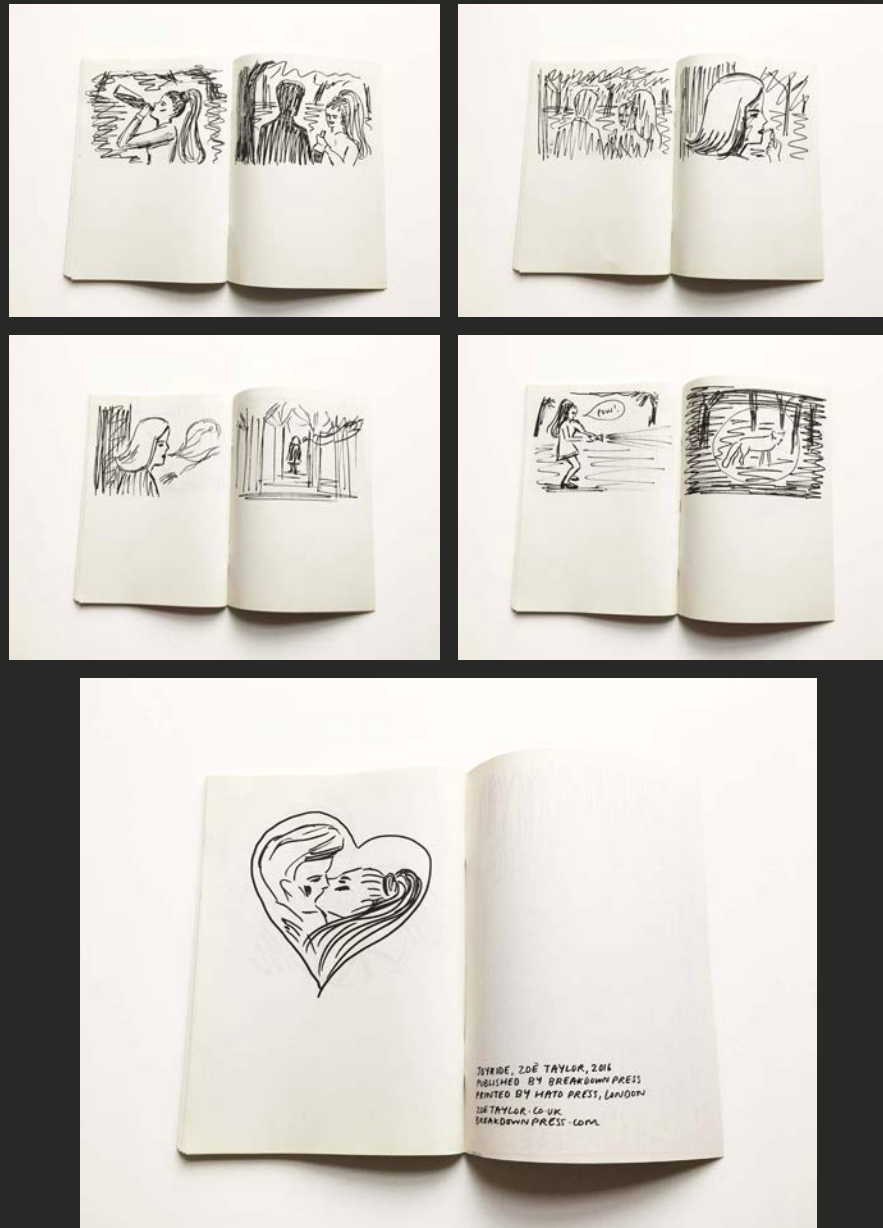


Figure 45.
Scenes from the book: ending

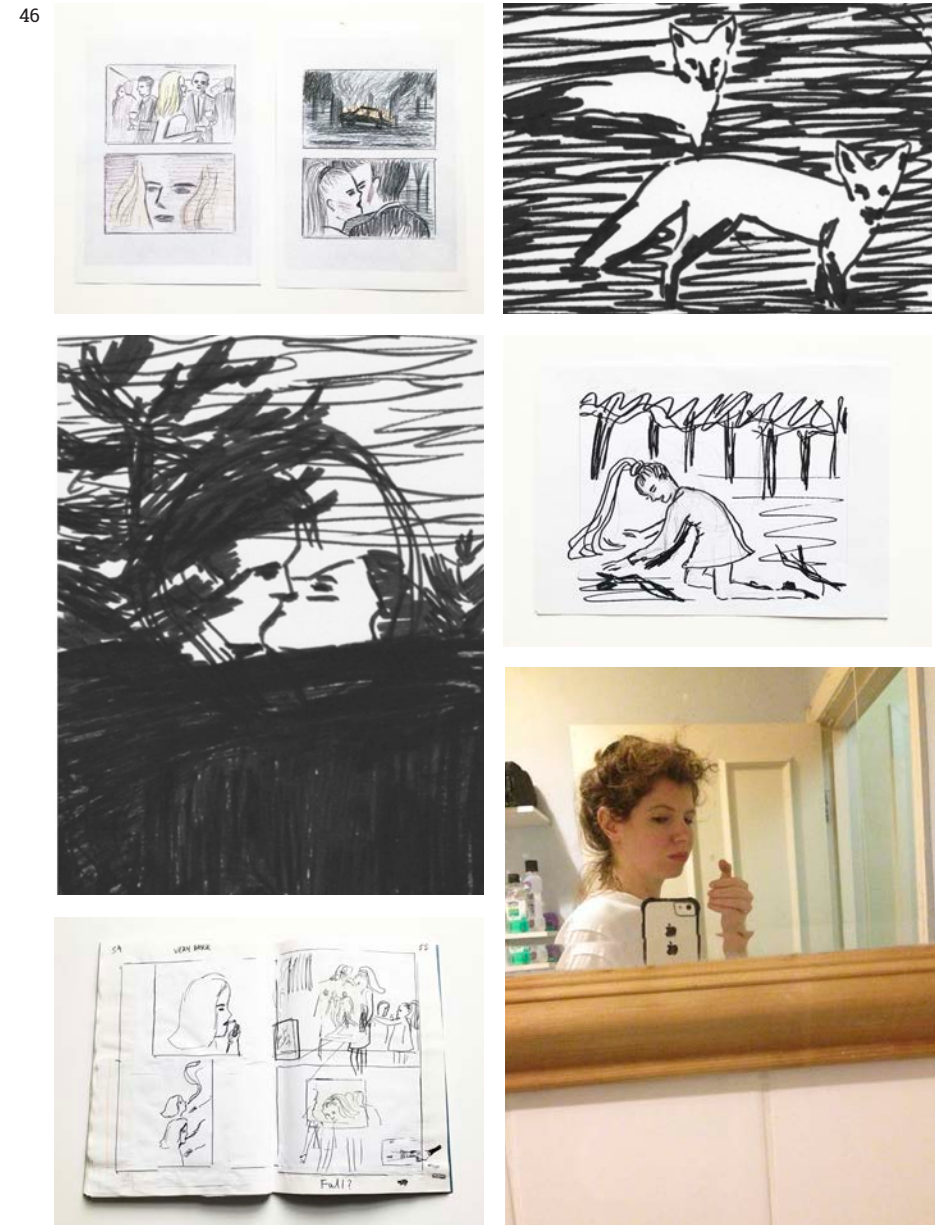


Figure 46.
Process work: ending

47



48

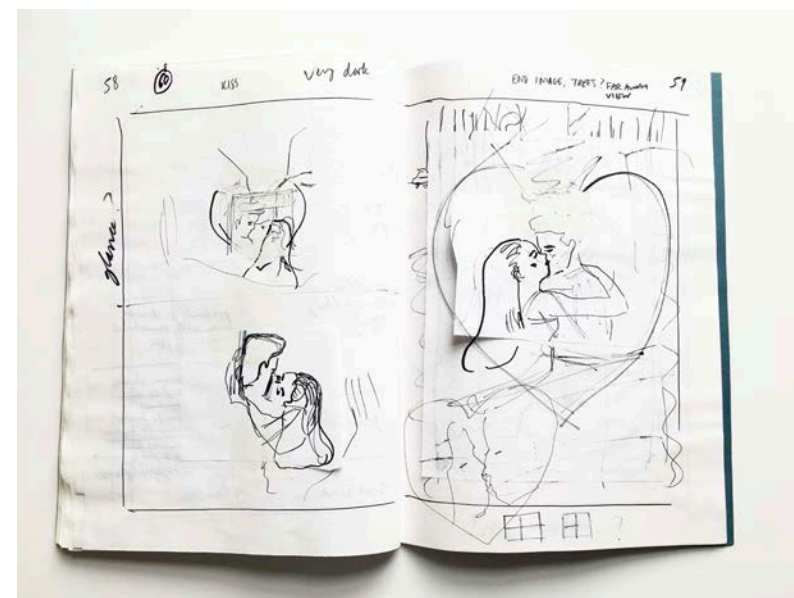


Figure 47+48.
Process work: ending

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Taylor. Z., (2008) 'The Sudden Image: Intensity and Disorientation in the Films of David Lynch', MA Dissertation, Royal College of Art, London

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